

HOMEGROUP QUESTIONS BASED ON NEHEMIAH 8 v1-12

A. CLIMBING LADDERS

1. Is the 'climbing a ladder' analogy when dealing with problems a helpful one?
2. Share any examples of 'ladders' you have successfully climbed. What role has your faith played in that process?
3. Share any examples of 'ladders' that you are still climbing.

THE STORY OF EZRA READING OUT 'THE LAW OF MOSES'

4. Why do you think the Jews decided in exile to move from relying on oral tradition to relying on a written set of scriptures?
5. Christians have very different views on God's role in producing written scriptures. Some see God as dictating every word. Others see God as inspiring the writer but believe the writer's experience, personality and opinions may still affect the outcome. There is also confusion sometimes over what writings should or should not be judged as 'scripture' (a notable example of this the Book of Revelations, which some Christian denominations do not include in the Bible). What do you mean when you speak of the Bible as being 'from God'?
6. Does it make any difference to how you look at the first five books of the Bible that they were not written by Moses but a thousand years after his death, possibly compiled by Ezra and others?
7. The main focus of the first five books of the Bible is on how and why the Jews became God's chosen people and the way of life therefore expected of them. This made obedience to 'the Mosaic Law' central to their faith. After much disputing the early Church largely accepted St Paul's view that the Law had become an irrelevancy - replaced by Christians asking Jesus into their lives and modelling their life on his teaching and example. How much time should we therefore give to studying the Mosaic law when Jesus summed up its real purpose in just two commandments?

THE HUMAN RESPONSE

8. What makes you weep about the world we live in?
9. Do you feel that, even when faced with the sinfulness of humanity, you can celebrate God's grace?
10. Nehemiah said 'The Joy of the Lord Provides Strength'. Look at the words of the hymn based on that text:

I will not falter, I will not faint
He is my Shepherd, I am not afraid
The joy of the Lord is my strength

The joy of the Lord will be my strength
He will uphold me all of my days
I am surrounded by mercy and grace

And the joy of the Lord is my strength

The joy of the Lord will be my strength
And I will not waiver, walking by faith
He will be strong to deliver me safe
And the joy of the Lord is my strength

What does the hymn have to say about what God will give us and how that can affect our outlook?
Would you describe your faith as being 'joyful'?

11. Jesus said: 'I have said these things so my joy may be yours and so that your joy may be complete'. Often we think of the challenges and suffering Jesus faced but the gospels also portray a man who enjoyed being with people and attending parties and celebrations. What do you think Jesus meant by saying he wanted us to have the joy in our lives that he had in his? What constitutes a joy that is 'complete'.

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